

U.S. 95 McArthur Lake Safety Improvement and Wildlife Crossing Executive Summary of Public Comment

Detailed Project Description:

The purpose of this project is to minimize vertical and horizontal curves along US 2/95 between milepost 492 and 494. By meeting the purpose of this project, a side benefit can be realized by providing for safe passage of wildlife beneath the highway.

At a public open house held January 30, 2006, the public was asked to provide comment as to their recommended alternatives to meet the purpose of the project. During that meeting three general themes were provided by the public.

Option A: Parallel the railroad tracks while removing the horizontal curves. The variations of this option ranged from removing the horizontal curves only, to a four lane divided highway with bridges spanning Deep Creek and a full interchange to access County Roads 3 & 4.

Option B: Straighten US 95 through the existing 45 mph curve but continue the alignment on a straight course through the IFG open space, over County Road 3, and join back to existing US 95 to the west and middle of the existing climbing lane. An alternate to this option was suggested that would realign the county road and connect it to US 2/95.

Option C: Extend US 95 from the curve at the nearest point to McArthur Lake, over the NE corner of the lake, through the IFG parking lot, and merge to US 95 at the top of the climbing lane.

Feasible combinations of these options will be developed and presented to the project working group and at the next public meeting for comment. While compiling the public comments into a combined alignment, certain geometric, design and environmental constraints will be addressed. Some of those constraints are the proximity of McArthur Lake, the fish ladder and outlet for Deep Creek to the west of the existing highway; the proximity of the BNR and UPRR railroad tracks to the east of the existing highway; connecting the two County roads (3 & 4) into the proposed highway alignment; the desire to combine the structure carrying the highway with an animal under crossing that meets the design criteria for successful animal crossings; the potential to maintain a climbing lane depending on the proposed vertical alignment; and the fact that this project addresses only 2 miles of US 2/95.

There were a number of public comments seeking 4 or 5 lanes to improve the safety of turning traffic. Although it is in the long range plans to construct US 2/95 to a four lane divided highway, US 2/95 north of Ponderay has not yet been studied. The purpose of this project is not to increase capacity, but to improve motorist safety. Therefore, additional lanes could be designed to allow for the safe ingress and egress of traffic, particularly at the County Road 3 & 4 intersection. In addition, it is desirable to modify County Roads 3 & 4 so that they intersect US 2/95 at right angles directly across from each other.